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Spain: Issues Behind the Conflict

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with the aid of the Research Staff of the Foreign Policy Association

IN its sixth month the Spanish civil war, which had so far involved an estimated loss of 500,000 lives, reached a military deadlock. General Franco had been held for almost two months at the gates of Madrid, yet the Loyalists were not sufficiently strong to take the offensive. Apparently foreign aid alone could tip the scales in one direction or the other. Reports that General Franco had asked Hitler for 40,000 men in addition to the estimated 10,000 German "volunteers" already serving in Rebel ranks led to decisive action by Britain and France. Neither the two Western democracies nor Italy, whose ardor for the Rebel cause had been cooled by negotiations for an Italo-British settlement in the Mediterranean, could view with equanimity the establishment on Spanish soil of a semi-permanent German army of occupation. On December 27 Britain and France warned Berlin against the dangers created by continued dispatch of "volunteers" to Spain.

The international significance of the Spanish conflict was due to ideological, as well as political and strategic considerations. Fascism and communism were pictured as the opposing forces in the struggle. This explanation proved too simple to fit the facts of the Spanish political scene. The avowed partisans of the two doctrines constituted only a small minority of the embattled factions. The forces on both sides were linked not so much by positive loyalty to a common ideal, as by negative fear of a common danger. On the Right, representatives of Spain's three conservative institutions—the army officers, large landowners and

clergy—joined with the Fascists and Monarchists against the threat of "Marxist revolution." On the Left, liberal Republicans (including the Basque Nationalists who are strongly Catholic) and the laboring masses—Socialists, Anarcho-Syndicalists and Communists of various shades—were united in an alignment opposed to any form of reaction, whether militarist, Monarchist, clerical or Fascist. But each coalition has had to contend against divergent aims and conflicting policies within its own ranks.

This report will briefly analyze the groups composing each of the two alignments, and then review the events of the past three years which led up to the 1936 revolt.¹ A succeeding report will cover the history of the civil war from its outbreak on July 17, 1936 to the present.

PARTIES TO THE CONFLICT

Since the turn of the century, the army officers have represented a privileged caste which repeatedly interfered in political affairs, both to protect its own interests and to influence public policy. In 1905 Parliament was forced to pass the Law of Jurisdictions, which gave military tribunals the right to try those accused of attacking the armed forces. King Alfonso XIII distinctly encouraged the increase of army influence. Military budgets

1. The history of the first two years of the Republic is given in Bailey W. Diffie, "Spain Under the Republic," *Foreign Policy Reports*, December 20, 1933.

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increased, most of the money being spent on salaries for generals and other officers, a smaller amount for war material and a still smaller sum in actual preparation for war.² The army became a "bureaucratic machine." In 1917 the officers organized *Juntas de Defensa*, which were powerful enough to make and unmake Cabinet Ministers. Following the military disaster at Annual, Morocco, in 1921, army influence was curbed under the Primo de Rivera dictatorship. But this policy cost Primo the united support of the military, and eventually contributed to his downfall.

With the advent of the Republic in 1931, Manuel Azaña as Minister of War initiated a campaign to take the army out of politics and limit the power of the officer caste, a majority of whose members were believed to be still in sympathy with the Monarchy. Military leaders were instructed to pledge allegiance to the republic or resign. The Law of Jurisdictions was repealed. Azaña sharply reduced the disproportionately large number of officers and permitted all those who wished, to retire on full pay. He later decreed that any retired officer convicted of political activity would lose his pension. These reforms had some effect, but still left the officer caste in substantial control of the armed forces. In 1932 General Sanjurjo led an unsuccessful Monarchist coup against the republic. But an amnesty in 1934 permitted the leaders of this movement to return to their posts.³

THE LANDLORDS

The number of Spain's large landholders probably does not exceed 15,000 to 20,000.⁴ These owned in 1930 about half of the territory which had undergone official survey. Some of the great estates exceeded 100,000 acres. In Cáceres province there were 12 landowners, each possessing approximately 19,000 acres. Many of these estates were feudal in origin, and up to the establishment of the republic feudal dues and fees were still exacted by their owners. During the 19th century the process of land concentration was furthered by a series of "enclosure laws," which deprived the peasants of their common lands and grazing

rights. Thousands of small farmers were dispossessed or reduced to the status of a rural proletariat. The laws brought to the new owners "the acquisition of more than half of the Peninsula for the tenth of its value." Thus land monopoly and land hunger were twin evils. According to a study of 800,000 rural families made within recent years by the Institute of Agrarian Reform, 350,000 owned no land, an approximately equal number had plots too small for self-support, and only 100,000 possessed sufficient land to make a living from their holdings.⁶

The system of vast estates was most extended in southern and western Spain. The opposite evil—excessive division into small plots—characterized the northern, northwestern and to some degree the eastern part of the country. But within the areas of small farms, much land was cultivated by renters, share croppers and leaseholders, who were often threatened by dispossession on slight pretext. The large estates were worked by landless laborers, who were completely dependent for life and living on the will of the great landlords. Wages were low, from 3 to 6 pesetas a day, but with work during only one-half or two-thirds of the year the normal income of laborers on the estates of southern Spain has been estimated at from 700 to 900 pesetas a year, with "absolutely indispensable expenses" totalling 2,000 pesetas. Thus the worker had normally a considerable "deficit," which he could pay only with "hunger and privation."⁷ By 1936 agricultural wages had fallen in some parts of the country to a peseta and a half daily. The social state of these rural workers was deplorable, illiteracy in some sections running as high as 85 per cent. Political life was largely controlled by the landlords through the *cacique* or local boss, who delivered votes or falsified election returns, in accordance with the wishes of the ruling powers of the locality.⁸

The republic was thus faced with the necessity of undertaking fundamental reform of the whole agricultural system. A year and a half elapsed, however, before the Law of Agrarian Reform went on the statute books in September 1932. This

2. Salvador de Madariaga, *Spain* (New York, Scribners, 1930), p. 238.

3. For a brief review of the rôle of the army in Spain, cf. Jean Rollin, "La Guerre civile en Espagne," *Politique Etrangère* (Paris), October 1936.

4. I.e., those owning farms of more than 250 hectares or 617.5 acres. Cf. Pascual Carrión, *Los Latifundios en España* (Madrid, Gráficas Reunidas, 1932), p. 67, who estimates that in the approximate half of Spanish territory surveyed up to 1930 (where the greater number of large holdings were concentrated) the landlords were limited to 10,000 families.

5. Joaquín Costa, *La Tierra y la Cuestión Social* (Vol. IV of the *Biblioteca Económica, Obras Completas*, Madrid, Biblioteca Costa, 1915).

6. Harry Gannes and Theodore Repard, *Spain in Revolt* (New York, Knopf, 1936), p. 175.

7. Carrión, *Los Latifundios en España*, cited, pp. 366, 367. Jean-Richard Bloch, *Espagne, Espagne!* (Paris, Editions Sociales Internationales, 1936), pp. 241-43, quotes the testimony of a rural worker on present-day conditions. The peseta today is quoted at approximately 14 cents.

8. Julian Cortes Cavanillas, *La Caída de Alfonso XIII* (Madrid, Librería de San Martín, 1933), pp. 14, 15.

legislation ordered the expropriation of all large estates owned by the *grandees*—those of medieval-feudal origin—and of all other properties exceeding 50 hectares (123.5 acres) if irrigated, or 750 hectares (1852.5 acres) if not irrigated. No compensation was accorded for the *grandees'* estates, which totalled approximately 1,500,000 acres, but other land was to be paid for in 50-year bonds, the value calculated by capitalizing farm incomes on a sliding scale ranging from 5 to 20 per cent. The state retained ownership of the land, which was distributed to the peasants in usufruct and could be farmed either individually or collectively. All feudal contributions were abolished. An Institute of Agrarian Reform, created to administer the law, was assigned 50,000,000 pesetas a year for this purpose. But the actual program of reform was not to be initiated until September 1933, after a year devoted to preliminary studies and a census of the workers.⁹ Up to the end of 1934 plots had been distributed to only 12,000 peasants.

THE CLERGY

With the landowners in the present struggle are ranged certain large industrialists, such as Juan March, the tobacco "king," and Francisco Cambó. The great majority of the clergy also support the Rebels, although their course has failed to win universal approval among Spanish Catholics.¹⁰ In Spain's political and social conflicts the church has not and does not today play the rôle of a neutral or bystander. It has taken a definite position in the battle. This fact may explain in part the frequent burning of church edifices. According to the testimony of eye-witnesses, machine guns have been fired from church towers and steeples against the civilian masses supporting the government; sacred edifices have been used as storehouses for ammunition and as barracks for Fascist organizations and Rebel militia.¹¹

But church-burnings and other demonstrations of popular hostility are no new thing in Spain. Anti-clericalism has long sought—as in Mexico and other "Catholic countries" both European and Latin-American—to limit the political and eco-

nomic power and at times the religious influence of the clergy. The church has been Spain's strongest and most dominant institution. It is declared to be the country's greatest property owner.¹²

This economic power of the church and its link with the reactionary Monarchy and landlords inevitably earned for it the enmity of the urban and rural proletariat, among whom Socialist and Anarcho-Syndicalist doctrines were increasingly gaining ground. The church's control of education aroused the criticism of liberal intellectuals. In 1931 the church had within its own schools half the total number of children in the country's educational institutions and exercised supervision over the other half, who were enrolled in state and municipal schools.¹³

Following establishment of the republic, church and state were separated, cemeteries secularized, civil marriage approved and divorce made legal. The Jesuits were ordered dissolved and their holdings seized. Church property was no longer to be tax-exempt; government subsidies were reduced by one-third in 1932 and were to be ended entirely after November 1933. In June 1933 the Cortes approved the Law of Religious Congregations, which prescribed confiscation of properties belonging to the religious orders, and elimination of their members from all educational activities, except the teaching of religion, by the end of that year. But before this legislation could come into effect, the Right and Center parties had gained power, and many of its provisions were honored more in the breach than in the observance.

The church, moreover, had not been slow to defend its position. The Spanish bishops published a pastoral letter prohibiting attendance of children at state schools. The Vatican voiced a strong protest and the Pontiff called on the Spanish faithful to "employ all legitimate means to nullify the hateful legislation." As early as the summer of 1932 the Catholics had joined their forces in *Acción Católica*, a non-political agency, and *Acción*

9. For the text of the Agrarian Reform Law and its complementary decree, cf. *Gaceta de Madrid*, September 21, 23, 25, and November 5, 1932.

10. Cf. article by a Basque Catholic, J. M. de Semprun Gurrea in *Esprit* (Paris), November 1936; and also the statement of a leading Catholic lawyer, Angel Ossorio Gallardo, in the *News-Chronicle* (London), August 14, 1936.

11. For accounts on this point, cf. Megan Laird, "Diary of Revolution," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1936; and Robert Neville, "Spain: Church against Republic," *New Republic*, September 16, 1936.

12. Cf. W. Horsfall Carter, "Spain and the Social Revolution," *International Affairs* (London), September-October 1936; and A. Ramos Oliveira, *El capitalismo español al desnudo* (Madrid, Enrique Prieto, 1935), Chap. 14. The Jesuit order alone was reported to control before the revolt eight banks, about thirty-five large-scale business enterprises, more than sixty newspapers in Madrid and the provinces, a news agency and a wireless station, and numerous theatres and motion-picture houses.

13. Cf. Madariaga, *Spain*, cited, p. 229. This moderate writer stated: "It would be difficult to find a country in which clericalism is more rigidly inimical to all reasonable compromise with the *zeitgeist* than contemporary Spain." (*Ibid.*, p. 220.) The clericals opposed public education, although in 1900 almost two-thirds of Spain's population were reported to be illiterate. Pío Zabala y Lera, *Historia de España, 1808-1923* (Barcelona, Sucesores de Juan Gili, 1931), Vol. II, pp. 201, 332.

Popular, a political party led by José María Gil Robles, whose principal backer was Angel Herrera, editor of the clerical daily *El Debate*. *Acción Popular* became the most important element in a wide confederation of Right groups, the *Confederación Española de Derechas Autónomas* or C.E.D.A., which was formed before the elections of November 1933.

MONARCHISTS AND FASCISTS

The Rebel cause has also won strong support from Monarchist groups and from the Spanish Falanx (*Falange Española*), an openly Fascist movement. Among the former, the Carlists have been especially prominent and have constituted, according to report, the bulk of the civilian militia with General Mola's northern forces.¹⁴ The leader of the Spanish Falanx has been José Antonio Primo de Rivera, son of the former dictator. The Fascists, according to statements of their leader, opposed restoration of the Monarchy, and instead favored establishment of an authoritarian régime, republican in form but free of Marxist influences. The group was not numerically strong before the rebellion; it drew its members chiefly from the lower middle classes, but in addition won some support from the urban proletariat. Its ranks were believed to include numerous gunmen who had formerly served the Anarcho-Syndicalists.¹⁵

LABOR AND THE LIBERALS

The government receives its principal support from the liberal Republicans and from labor. Among the former, the most important parties are the Republican Left of President Azaña, largely a personal following; the middle-class Republican Union of Martínez Barrio, and the *Esquerra*, led by Luis Companys, which has been the ruling party in Catalonia. These groups have all favored continuance of bourgeois democracy in Spain. In addition, the Basque Nationalists, traditionally conservative and Catholic, have ranged themselves with the government forces, due in large part to the grant of autonomous privileges which this region has long coveted.¹⁶

14. The Carlist group dates from 1833, when its members supported the pretensions of Don Carlos, brother of Ferdinand VII, against Isabella, Ferdinand's daughter. They have since advocated the principle of autocratic monarchy, as opposed to the constitutional monarchy of the Bourbons.

15. Cf. John Elliott, "With the Rebels," *Atlantic Monthly*, November 1936; and Rollin, "La Guerre civile en Espagne," cited, p. 76.

16. On October 1, 1936 the Cortes approved a statute of autonomy for the Basque provinces, similar in character to the regional self-government won by Catalonia in 1932.

Among the proletarian groups¹⁷ supporting the government, the Socialists have occupied the most prominent position. With the Socialist party, whose membership is estimated at 65,000, are allied the trade-union organizations of the General Workers Union (*Unión General de Trabajadores* or U.G.T.), which is generally credited with 1,500,000 adherents. For many years the Socialists, whose strength centers in Madrid, followed a conservative and "reformist" policy. During the first two years of the republic, they collaborated with the Left Republicans in a coalition government. But subsequently intensified radical trends among the masses led important elements in the party to swing to the Left. Francisco Largo Caballero, General Secretary of the U.G.T., abandoned his former social democratic principles to argue for violent seizure of power by the proletariat. In contrast Indalecio Prieto favored an opportunist and parliamentary program toward the Socialist Commonwealth. Following the outbreak of the revolt, the United Socialist Party (P.S.U.C.) was formed in Catalonia, representing a fusion of two Socialist groups, the old "official" Catalan Communist party, and the Catalan Workers' party, a left-wing split from the *Esquerra*. This new party is reported to control the Catalan U.G.T., which now claims 450,000 members.

The Communist movement in Spain has never attained great strength. Its adherents are not believed to number more than 50,000 in the whole country. The party has within recent years pursued a conservative course, in accord with the new "line" laid down by the Comintern in 1935. It has advocated cooperation with the middle-class liberals, and striven to curb trends toward violent revolution. Before the outbreak of civil war, Communist and Socialist youth had joined in creating an organization with a reported following of 60,000.

The principal rivals and often the bitter enemies of the Socialists in Spain have been the Anarcho-Syndicalists. The Iberian Anarchist Federation (F.A.I.), with approximately 10,000 members, has functioned roughly as the general staff for the Na-

17. Brief discussions in English of the Spanish labor movement and its various groups are found in Gannes and Repard, *Spain in Revolt*, cited, pp. 209-220; Conze, *Spain Today* (New York, Greenberg, 1936), pp. 45-73; Lawrence A. Fernsworth, "Mass Movements in Spain," *Foreign Affairs* (New York), July 1936. For histories in Spanish of the labor movement from the Anarcho-Syndicalist and the Socialist point of view, respectively, cf. Manuel Buenacasa, *El Movimiento Obrero Español, 1886-1926* (Barcelona, Impresos Costa, 1928); and Juan José Morato, *El Partido Socialista* (Madrid, Biblioteca Nueva, 1918).

tional Confederation of Labor (*Confederación Nacional de Trabajo* or C.N.T.), an association of industrial unions, not all of whose members accept anarchist principles. The strength of this body has varied greatly in recent years; at one time it was credited with 1,500,000 adherents, but at the 1936 Saragossa Congress reported only 600,000 "troops." The Anarcho-Syndicalists have their largest following in the industrialized sections of Catalonia, in Saragossa and Andalusia. The Don Quixotes of the labor movement, they stress the typically Spanish values of individual liberty and local self-government, in contrast with the discipline and centralized bureaucracy advocated by the Communists. Traditionally opposed to political activity, they favor the tactics of direct action—strike, boycott, sabotage—and have "an almost religious worship" for violence. Although their doctrine is often vague, they preach a "libertarian communism," which would safeguard individual freedom by organizing society into a federation of relatively autonomous communes.

A group more significant for its intellectual influence than for its numbers is the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (*Partido Obrero de Unificación Marxista* or P.O.U.M.). Its adherents are currently estimated at 8,000. This group was formed by the union of the Trotzkyites, led by Andrés Nin, with the Workers and Peasants Bloc, led by Joaquín Maurín, a "right" deviationist Communist. This group advocates a union among the workers rather than joint action with the bourgeoisie, and beginning with 1933 took the lead in forming Workers' Alliances (*Alianzas Obreras*). These represented an attempt to organize in local communities a common block of all proletarian agencies.¹⁸ They included, in addition to Unified Marxists, Socialists, peasants, Communists and in some places Anarcho-Syndicalists.

CONSERVATIVES IN POWER

Following the downfall of Alfonso XIII in 1931, power during the first two years of the republic was held by the liberal intellectuals and the Socialists. A new constitution was framed and steps were taken toward the agrarian and religious reforms already mentioned, as well as more comprehensive labor legislation, increase of secular education and extension of autonomy to Catalonia. But the struggle to achieve these gains destroyed the unity of the governing coalition. At the same time

the strength of the opposition was augmented, as the special interests of various groups were successively attacked. As a result, the country experienced a sharp swing to the Right.

The elections of November and December 1933 ushered in a two-year period during which Spain's Right and Center forces were to hold the reins of power. In contrast to the 1931-1933 period of Socialist-Left Republican dominance, with its definite program of reforms, its continuing agitation for change and progress, its fever of strikes and other expressions of unrest, this term was characterized by a trend toward reaction and, for a time, by relative tranquillity. Many of the hard-won gains of the preceding régime were nullified. Political action, however, was hampered by almost kaleidoscopic changes in cabinets and reigning confusion in the Cortes. The revolt of October 1934 punctuated the period with the somber threat of civil war.

The Lerroux government, composed principally of members of the centrist Radicals, was granted the backing, although not the active collaboration, of a majority of the Right parties. Gil Robles and his Catholic followers in the Popular Action party constituted the largest single group in the Cortes. Without formally committing themselves to renunciation of Monarchist leanings, they agreed to support Lerroux on the basis of amendment of the agrarian reform and the legislation governing the *Jurados Mixtos* (industrial juries of workers and employers); modification of laws affecting the church and education; and eventual reform of the constitution.

Fulfillment of these pledges was promptly initiated. But in April 1934 the Lerroux Cabinet was succeeded by another Right-Center coalition, headed by Ricardo Samper of Valencia. A protracted dispute with the regional authorities of Catalonia over an agrarian law enacted at Barcelona¹⁹ gradually undermined the government's support on the Right, particularly that of Gil Robles.

Meanwhile, the Left parties nurtured serious suspicions concerning the loyalty of Gil Robles and his adherents to the republic and the constitution. In 1933 the Vatican had published the Encyclical *Dilectissima Nobis*, which declared that "the Catholic Church, being in no manner bound to one form of government more than another,

18. Cf. Joaquín Maurín, *Hacia la Segunda Revolución* (Barcelona, Gráficos Alfa, 1935), pp. 107-109, 114.

19. For a succinct review of this controversy, as well as that with the Basque provinces, cf. E. Allison Peers, *The Spanish Tragedy* (New York, Oxford University Press, 1936), pp. 153-59. A more extensive review of events during this period is given in Raymond Leslie Buell, editor, *New Governments in Europe* (revised edition; New York, Nelson, 1937).

provided always that the rights of God and of the Christian conscience are safeguarded, finds no difficulty in accommodating itself to the various civil institutions, be they monarchic or be they republican."²⁰ With this authorization, Gil Robles won over the vast majority of Catholics to support the Lerroux government, much to the chagrin of the Monarchists and the Fascist Phalanx.

But the Left forces could not forget that the leader of Popular Action, a former Monarchist, had shown himself frankly anti-republican as a member of the Constituent Cortes. He had refused to vote for the constitution when it was approved. He was looked upon in many quarters as the representative of the Jesuits, and thus excited the distrust traditionally associated with that order. Moreover, in the 1933 elections Popular Action had supported a joint ticket with the Monarchists in various districts.²¹ On February 4, 1934, however, Gil Robles—in a speech at Seville—called on all his followers to pledge allegiance to the republic, so that the way might be opened for Popular Action to participate in the Cabinet. He had repeatedly affirmed, both before and after this date, that when the time was ripe he and his adherents would accept Cabinet posts and serve the republic faithfully.²² But the loyalty he proffered was regarded as pragmatic and opportunist; his party, moreover, never met the demands of its political opponents for official renunciation of its desire for Monarchical restoration. Left-Republican and labor forces feared also that attainment of power by the Catholic Popular Action would presage restoration of the old order, destruction of the labor movement, repeal of anti-clerical and agrarian legislation, and ultimately establishment of a clerical-Fascist régime. Gil Robles professed faith in ideas of "Christian democracy" similar to those preached by Chancellor Dollfuss of Austria, whose annihilation of Austrian socialism had stirred apprehension in Spain.²³

20. Quoted in Lawrence A. Fernsworth, "Back of the Spanish Rebellion," *Foreign Affairs*, October 1936.

21. Cf. Luis Araquistain, "October Revolution in Spain," *Foreign Affairs*, January 1935.

22. Cf. Francisco Casares, *La C.E.D.A. va a Gobernar* (Madrid, Gráfica Administrativa, 1934), pp. 109, 122, 123, 185, 221.

23. Gil Robles had visited Austria in the summer of 1933 to study the tactics of Dollfuss. In September he attended the Nazi Congress at Nuremberg. Apparently impressed with the value of large popular demonstrations, he called a concentration of Popular Action Youth for April 22, 1934, at the Escorial near Madrid, one of the most important centers of Spain's conservative traditions. But a general strike in the capital seriously hampered the success of this demonstration. For the 19-point creed approved at the Escorial, cf. Casares, *La C.E.D.A. va a Gobernar*, cited, pp. 207, 208.

Left-wing leaders warned on September 23 that the entry of representatives of Catholic Popular Action into a new Cabinet would be the signal for revolution.²⁴ This threat was received all the more seriously because of the discovery earlier in the month of deposits of arms and munitions in Socialist hands, both at Madrid and in Asturias. Minister of Interior Salazar Alonzo charged that Left-wing groups had expended 5,000,000 pesetas on war stocks.²⁵

LEFT REVOLT FAILS—OCTOBER 1934

When the Cortes reconvened on October 1, Gil Robles attacked Premier Samper's statement on the Catalan question and declared that the government had made "weak and disgraceful concessions to a rebellious region."²⁶ Loss of his support made the fall of the Samper government inevitable. Three days later, on October 4, Lerroux succeeded in forming another Cabinet. But the inclusion of three members of the Catholic Popular Action party set off the spark of revolt.

At the news of the Lerroux-Gil Robles Cabinet, the chiefs of all the Republican parties—with the single exception of Lerroux' own Radicals—protested to President Alcalá-Zamora, and on October 5 formally withdrew their support from the government. General strikes were called in various parts of Spain by the Socialist General Workers Union and by the Workers' Alliances, in which Socialists, Communists and independent groups of workers and peasants had joined. The revolt, whose leadership was attributed chiefly to Socialists, began without a centralized plan and in reality proved to be "a series of provincial insurrections." It was a triangular affair, with its principal points at Madrid in the center, Catalonia to the east and the Asturias to the north. In the capital and other centers the strike was supported by the Socialists and Communists, but found the Anarcho-Syndicalists divided in sympathies.²⁷

To Catalonia the Lerroux-Gil Robles government represented a double challenge. It threatened the hard-won autonomy of the region, and endangered the position of the Catalan government whose principal support was drawn from the *Esquerra*, a Left-wing party of the lower middle class and the workers. It also menaced the rights of labor. The situation thus favored common ac-

24. *New York Times*, September 24, 1934.

25. *Ibid.*, September 15 and 24, 1934; and *La Prensa* (New York), September 20, 1934.

26. *New York Times*, October 2, 1934.

27. M. Dashar, *The Revolutionary Movement in Spain* (New York, Libertarian Publishing Society), p. 21.

tion by the Catalan government and the Workers' Alliances. The latter declared a general strike in Barcelona on October 5. But the Generalidad hesitated to take a decisive step.²⁸ The general strike demonstrated the popular support available for a movement of revolt, but carried with it the threat of potential social revolution, which if loosed might sweep the Generalidad from power. By the evening of October 6, however, delay was no longer possible and at eight o'clock Companys proclaimed from the balcony of the government palace the establishment of the Catalan state as part of a yet-to-be created Spanish Federal Republic.²⁹ Such a step would insure greater freedom for Catalonia, without definitive separation from the rest of Spain, and was designed to channel the revolt along political rather than social lines. It was apparently launched in the expectation that Madrid would show some disposition to compromise, and that the dispute would be settled by negotiation. But General Domingo Batet, commander of the regular army forces in Catalonia, brought out his troops, shelled several government buildings, promptly forced the surrender of the Generalidad palace, captured Companys, Dencás and other leaders, and by October 7 had crushed the insurrection. Two days later the workers returned to their tasks.

The rebellion proved most serious in the mountains of Asturias to the north, where it lasted two weeks. In this region had developed one of the best-organized and most aggressive labor movements of all Spain. Moreover, here alone did the workers present a solidly united front; the Workers' Alliance included Anarcho-Syndicalists as well as Socialists and Communists. From the first the movement was one of open armed resistance; the miners constituted the nucleus of the revolt. A Workers' Militia was formed. On the morning of the 6th Oviedo was attacked. Proclamations were issued calling the proletariat to arms, prohibiting pillage, confiscating supplies of food and clothing for equitable distribution among the population. A Socialist republic in embryo was established.³⁰

But while the workers of Asturias had wagered their all on the issue of battle, the revolt in Cata-

lonia had capitulated, and the movement in Madrid had fallen far short of a revolutionary offensive. With all hope lost for a nation-wide rising, the Workers' Alliance of Oviedo decided on a "strategic retreat." On October 19 a pact between General López Ochoa, government commander, and Belarmino Tomás, workers' leader, ended the conflict, although guerrilla bands carried on for some time longer in the mountains. During the struggle the city was shelled by artillery and bombed from the air; many of its finest buildings, including the university, were destroyed or gutted by fire.³¹

Atrocities on both sides were reported in the course of the fighting.³² The revolutionists were accused of murdering and maltreating priests and Civil Guards. The Foreign Legion and the Moors, brought into a region which centuries before had been Spain's last Christian stronghold during the period of Mohammedan rule in the peninsula, were charged with wantonly killing and torturing many defenseless civilians, including women and children.³³ Estimates placed the number of killed in the revolt at 1355, with 2951 wounded.³⁴ Following the defeat of the movement, Spain's prisons were crowded with 30,000 offenders. Reports that prisoners were brutally beaten and tortured were frequent.³⁵ Among those imprisoned were 14 deputies in the Cortes, including ex-Premier Manuel Azaña, President Companys of Catalonia, and Francisco Largo Caballero, Socialist leader.

Although Largo Caballero and other Left leaders had long threatened rebellion and quantities of arms had been imported and distributed among labor and other groups, the leadership of the October revolt was patently ineffective. The revolutionary elements lacked cohesion and a centralized direction; the movement failed to enlist the cooperation of many important groups. The Anarcho-Syndicalists remained largely passive, as did the lower middle class. The peasants offered small participation. No support was won in the army, or among the ranks of the Civil and Assault Guards.

31. For an account of the government's campaign against the rebels, cf. General López Ochoa, *Campaña Militar de Asturias en Octubre de 1934* (Madrid, Editorial Yunque, 1936).

32. Cf. *New York Times*, October 29, 1934.

33. *La Revolución de Asturias*, cited, pp. 12 ff.

34. A. Ramos Oliveira, *The Drama of Spain, 1931-1936* (London, the National Council of Labour), p. 11.

35. Cf. statements by Félix Gordón Ordás, Deputy in the Cortes from León; Vicente Marcos Miranda, Deputy from Valencia; and Fernando de los Ríos, Socialist and former Cabinet Minister. The English text of the greater part of these documents is given in Leah Manning, *What I Saw in Spain* (London, Gollancz, 1935).

28. Within the *Esquerra* a struggle was in process between Companys, representing the creed of democracy and traditional republicanism, and Dencás, Minister of the Interior, with tendencies toward separatism and a Catalan fascism. Cf. Maurín, *Hacia la Segunda Revolución*, cited, p. 130.

29. For the full Catalan text of the speech of Señor Companys, cf. *Bulletin of Spanish Studies* (Liverpool), 1935, Vol. XII, pp. 11-12.

30. For a detailed story of the revolt by a resident of Oviedo, cf. *La Prensa*, October 22, 1934.

The failure of the October revolt served to strengthen the Right against the Left, the large landowners and industrialists against the workers and peasants, the church against the anti-clericals, and centralism against regionalism. The Lerroux government sought in general to follow a moderate policy in its liquidation of the October revolt. But a rift in the reigning coalition developed over the application of death penalties decreed by military tribunals for the chiefs of the insurrection in Asturias. By the end of March two leaders had already been executed and twenty more were under sentence. The Radicals favored a reprieve for the condemned; but the Cabinet representatives of the Catholics, the Agrarians and the Liberal Democrats demanded execution, and resigned on March 29, 1935 when this was refused. Popular Action, however, returned to the government late in April, winning representation in five seats, including Gil Robles in the War Ministry. It was announced that the new régime would devote its principal attention to reform of the 1931 constitution and to the budget.

The Cortes approved a Law of Restrictions, which aimed at drastic economies in government bureaucracy, abolishing many offices, and cutting salaries and allowances. This attempt to balance the budget failed when Catholic Popular Action refused to support a program of somewhat heavier taxation on the rich. Loss of this group's backing led to the fall of the Cabinet on December 9, the sixth crisis within a year. Although Gil Robles still headed the largest party in the Cortes, President Alcalá-Zamora again passed him over—this time in favor of Manuel Portela Valladares, a Center politician. The latter formed an interim ministry, whose principal responsibility was to be the holding of general elections, which could no longer be postponed.

POPULAR FRONT WINS 1936 ELECTION

The six weeks of the campaign period witnessed a unification of forces on both Right and Left. The former drew together into what they termed an anti-Marxist alliance, and proclaimed themselves the defenders of Law and Order. The latter, emulating the example which France had set in July 1935, organized a Popular Front. This coalition linked together, for cooperation in a common program and against the common threat of semi-Fascist and Monarchist reaction, the moderate liberals of the Left-Republican parties and all the labor groups, save a majority of the Anarcho-Syndicalists.³⁶ Its platform, which was

signed on January 16, 1936, was to provide the basis for joint action in the election campaign, and also the "norm of government which the Left Republican parties are to carry out, with the support of labor forces, in the event of victory."³⁷

Since this platform constituted the official program of the Popular Front and later was to be attacked by Rebel leaders as "communistic," a somewhat detailed analysis may be in order. The agreement was divided into ten sections. The first called for a sweeping amnesty, directed toward freeing the 30,000 political prisoners who had been held in confinement since October 1934. It also pledged reinstatement to the hundreds of thousands who had lost their jobs for political reasons in both public and private employment. Section two promised maintenance and enforcement of the constitution, reform of the courts and investigation of abuses charged to the police and armed forces. In section three, devoted to agrarian questions, the Left Republicans refused to support the Socialist demand for nationalization of land, but instead offered to the peasants a new tenancy law, reduction in taxes and rents, and other advantages. The law compensating those grandees whose estates had been seized was to be repealed. The fourth section advocated a certain degree of government regulation of industry and commerce. Section five called for an extensive program of public works; the Left Republicans, however, declined to accept the principle of an unemployment dole advocated by the workers' representatives. In section six, the Left Republican parties stopped short of the nationalization of banking demanded by the labor parties, but agreed to stricter regulation both of the Bank of Spain and private banking, and in addition pledged tax reforms. The seventh section dealt with social legislation, promising reorganization of industrial arbitration, minimum wages, employment offices and general stimulus of welfare agencies. Section eight advocated development of public education, supervision of private schools and wider access to middle and higher education by working-class students. The two final sections promised re-establishment of the

36. Specifically the Popular Front included the following organizations: among bourgeois parties, the Republican Left of Azaña and the Republican Union of Martínez Barrio; the Socialist party, with its trade union counterpart, the General Workers Union; the National Federation of Socialist Youth; the Communist party; the Syndicalist party—led by Angel Pestaña—a faction of Right-wing Syndicalists willing to support political action; and the Workers Party of Marxist Unification (P.O.U.M.). The last-named group later withdrew from the Popular Front.

37. *El Sol* (Madrid), January 16, 1936. This issue published the full text of the Popular Front program.

principles of regional autonomy and declared that in foreign policy Spain would be guided by the Covenant of the League of Nations. In this platform the moderate views of the middle-class parties clearly predominated over the more radical demands of labor. It was a program of liberal reform, but by no means one of social revolution.

In the elections of February 16 and the run-off poll on March 1, the Popular Front scored a decisive victory. It elected approximately 258 deputies in the Cortes, to 62 representatives of the Center parties, and 152 of the Right. The returns, as compared with those of the 1933 elections were as follows:³⁸

LIBERAL AND LABOR PARTIES*	1936	1933	Gains
Liberal or Left-Republican parties	148	32	116
Labor parties	110	60	50
	258	92	166
CENTER AND RIGHT PARTIES			Losses
Center parties	62	173	111
Right parties	152	196	44
	214†	369‡	155

*Most of these supported the 1936 Popular Front.

†The Cortes has a total of 473 deputies; this count indicates one seat still in dispute.

‡There were 12 vacancies when this count was taken in December 1933.

The popular majority of the Left parties, which has been the subject of considerable controversy, was much less impressive than their gains in the Cortes. Including the figures for the Basque Nationalists (132,247), who are now supporting the Popular Front government, the liberal and labor groups had a total of 4,206,156 votes, as compared with 3,783,601 for the Right parties, and 681,047 for the Center.³⁹ The Popular Front owed much of its triumph to the solid vote

38. The 1933 figures are taken from República Española. Congreso de los Diputados, Biblioteca, *Boletín de Información Bibliográfica y Parlamentaria de España y del Extranjero* (Madrid), November-December 1933, p. 1069; the 1936 figures from *ibid.*, January-February 1936, pp. 121-48. For the most important individual parties, the changes were as follows:

Liberal and Labor Parties	1936	1933	Gain or Loss
Republican Left (Manuel Azaña)	82	11	+71
Esquerra (Catalan Left)	21	17	+4
Socialist party	89	59	+30
Communist party	14	1	+13
Center and Right Parties			
Radical party (Alejandro Lerroux)	8	101	-93
Agrarian party	13	31	-18
C.E.D.A. (Gil Robles)	98	115	-17
Lliga (Catalan Right)	11	26	-15
Monarchist parties	23	36	-13

of labor; even the Anarcho-Syndicalists overcame their traditional aversion to political action and went to the polls, hoping to secure amnesty for their imprisoned comrades through a Popular Front victory; many middle-class voters, dissatisfied with the record of the Center-Right governments and fearful of Fascist aggression against the republic, also supported the victorious coalition.

As soon as the Left victory became known, there was an immediate demand for fulfillment of the Popular Front's most urgent platform pledge—that of an amnesty for political prisoners. Riots within the prisons and mass demonstrations in the cities augmented the popular clamor. The Cabinet resigned on February 19 and President Alcalá-Zamora appointed Manuel Azaña, leader of the Popular Front, to head a new ministry. His Cabinet was composed entirely of middle-class representatives, members of Republican Left and Republican Union. The Socialists were divided on the question of accepting seats in a ministry which included bourgeois parties, and remained outside the government.

Azaña promptly published the amnesty decree, and the jails were rapidly emptied of their thousands of political offenders. This was followed on February 28 by a second decree authorizing reinstatement of all workers whose revolutionary sympathies had cost them their jobs; employers were required to pay compensation for the time lost.

THE ROAD TO REBELLION

The forces of social unrest were not slow to take advantage of the excited state of the popular temper. In the cities Leftist demonstrations of victory were attended by the burning of churches and convents—for many decades a recurrent phenomenon in Spanish history. The political clubs and newspaper offices of Fascist and Monarchist groups were sacked and pillaged.

Unrest in the agricultural districts—especially in western and southern Spain—took the form of forcible seizure of large estates by impatient peasants. For five years they had waited for the land promised to them. The Center and Right forces, following their triumph in November 1933, promptly threw out of gear the machinery for agrarian distribution which was just getting under way. This was followed by a law of August 1,

39. These statistics are based on the *Boletín de Información Bibliográfica y Parlamentaria de España y del Extranjero*, cited, January-February 1936, pp. 121-48.

1935 which required full compensation for all land expropriated from the *grandees*.⁴⁰ Then only fifty thousand pesetas (as compared with fifty million in previous years) were appropriated annually for such compensation. The practical effect of this law was entirely to stop distribution of land. The victory of the Popular Front markedly speeded up agrarian reform. By the end of March 70,000 *yunteros* (so-called because they owned their own *yuntas* or yokes of mules or oxen, with which they tilled their rented plots) had been assigned land for cultivation.⁴¹ But many peasants remained unsatisfied. It would soon be too late for the spring sowing. Under the leadership of the Socialist Agricultural Federations, various groups proceeded to direct action. One incident in the southwestern province of Badajoz is thus described:

"At 5.0 a.m. on March 25, organized groups of labourers armed with ropes, spades and other implements mustered secretly and trooped out from 150 of the 163 villages of the province; they proceeded—many of them on their donkeys, of course—to the neighbouring big estates and calmly marked out the strips which they proposed to occupy for cultivation under the new land settlement system. Then, after a lusty cry of '*Viva la República!*' they marched back to their villages, held a demonstration meeting in front of the local Government Building, and then sent a commission to get formal approval for their land-taking, their case being that they had been promised the land in the Government election programme, but that all kinds of bureaucratic obstacles were being put in their way"⁴²

In some cases the act was accepted and legalized with considerable dispatch; in others the peasants were dislodged from the seized land. But widespread rural agitation stimulated governmental action. On March 20 a decree had declared of "social utility" and thus subject to expropriation all farms situated in districts (*términos municipales*) possessing the following characteristics: great concentration of property; a high proportion of peasants in relation to the total population; a low ratio of available land in comparison with the number of peasants; prevalence of extensive cultivation.⁴³ On

June 18 the law of August 1, 1935 was repealed and the 1932 reform legislation declared again in force.⁴⁴

On March 16 peasants occupied two estates belonging to Niceto Alcalá-Zamora. But a greater misfortune than this was in store for the President of the republic. His efforts to strengthen Center forces and steer a middle course between the violently antagonistic Right and Left had earned for him the active ill will of both groups. The Left elements were particularly hostile, blaming him for the repressions they had suffered following the October 1934 revolt. It was decided that the President must be ousted and his withdrawal was forced by a motion which Parliament approved on April 7. Diego Martínez Barrio, presiding officer of the Cortes, temporarily succeeded to the Presidency. Elections were held on May 10 and Azaña was named as the new President. Santiago Casares Quiroga became Prime Minister, heading a Cabinet similar in composition to the one which had preceded it.

But political and social ferment did not cease. The masses, disillusioned by the meager gains they had obtained from the bourgeois republic, were becoming increasingly radical. On June 16 Gil Robles charged in the Cortes that since the February elections there had been 113 general strikes and 218 partial strikes. A wave of murders by gunmen and political assassinations further alarmed public opinion. Some of the slayings were attributed to Leftist gunmen; others to Fascist assassins. Of all the Right groups the Spanish Phalanx, Spain's self-proclaimed Fascists, had shown itself most aggressive since the February elections.^{44a} The government ordered the Phalanx dissolved; Primo de Rivera and hundreds of other Fascists were imprisoned. But still disorders continued. In his speech of June 16 Gil Robles, leader of Catholic Action, summed up the history of the previous four months by declaring that in that period 269 persons had been killed, 1500 others seriously injured, and 251 churches had been burned or partially destroyed.⁴⁵

40. This legislation, together with the sections of the 1932 laws still left in force, was published as the law of November 9, 1935. *Gaceta*, November 19, 1935. Lands previously expropriated without compensation were declared only under temporary occupation, and rent was to be paid to the owners from the date of seizure.

41. For the decrees in question, dated March 3 and 14, cf. *Boletín del Instituto de Reforma Agraria* (Madrid), March 1936, pp. 195-204.

42. W. Horsfall Carter, "Spain To-day"; *The Listener*, 1936, Vol. XV, pp. 797-99, 826; quoted in Peers, *The Spanish Tragedy*, cited, p. 197.

43. For text, cf. *Boletín del Instituto de Reforma Agraria*, cited, March 1936, pp. 206-207. This decree was based on a provision curiously included in the reactionary law of August 1, 1935, permitting expropriation of farms declared to be of "social utility."

44. *Ibid.*, June 1936, p. 643. This issue (pp. 664-87) contains a review of the republic's agrarian policy for 1931-1936.

44a. There seems little doubt of their responsibility for much of the violence. In July the Madrid police reported discovery of Fascist documents which instructed district leaders "to promote and foment the greatest possible number of strikes, especially in the public services." *New York Times*, July 7, 1936.

45. *New York Times*, June 17, 1936.

Meanwhile, army leaders were becoming increasingly restive. A secret officers' association, the *Unión Militar Española*,⁴⁶ was engaged in activities similar to those formerly carried on by the *Juntas de Defensa*. On March 15, 1936 army chiefs were reported to have issued a virtual ultimatum to Premier Azaña threatening—unless the civil authorities took effective steps to quell riots and end destruction of property—that the armed forces would take matters into their own hands. Meanwhile, the government was concerned about the loyalty of many of the officers. On April 17 a decree provided that all officers known to have been active in political affairs be retired from the army immediately on pension, while those already on the retired list who had engaged in such activity were to be deprived of their pensions.⁴⁷ On the following day, the War and Interior Ministries initiated a general shake-up in the high commands; officers suspected of Monarchist or Conservative sympathies were dismissed or transferred to distant posts. General Francisco Franco, who had been Chief of Staff under the Gil Robles ministry and previously in command of the Foreign Legion in Morocco, was "exiled" to the Canary Islands; General Goded was dispatched to the Balearics. General López Ochoa, allegedly one of the *Unión* members, was arrested by the Popular Front government on May 12, 1936, charged with unnecessary cruelty in suppressing the 1934 revolt in Asturias. At the beginning of July Casares Quiroga, then Minister of War as well as Premier, ordered General Gómez Morato, Commander-in-Chief in Morocco, to remove the majority of Foreign Legion officers from their posts. Resentment at these steps was supposedly the prime motive for the conspiracy; the control of the armed forces by the ruling clique of generals was clearly menaced. The murder of Calvo Sotelo on July 13 appears to have been only the immediate cause of the revolt; it precipitated an outbreak which was premature, according to report, by two months.⁴⁸

CONCLUSION

The Spanish civil war was not provoked by Communists, either in Spain or Moscow. Those immediately responsible for its outbreak were the army generals, who feared loss of their control over the country's armed forces. The evidence available to date affords no substantial support for the charge, so assiduously fostered by certain sections of the American press, that communism was mainly to blame for plunging Spain into bloodshed. The Communist party has been credited by most authorities with not more than 50,000 supporters in all Spain, an inconsiderable group in a total population of 29,000,000. At the same time, Moscow has sought to avoid any threat to European peace which might endanger the internal progress of the U.S.S.R. Rumors were current in Spain that some form of "Marxist revolution" was contemplated by the Socialists and other labor groups. But the program of the Spanish Popular Front government, against which the army rebelled, called for liberal rather than radical reforms. The wave of death and disorder which preceded the revolt was due as much to Fascist as to Left-wing aggression.

Spain's civil war is to be understood only if an attempt is made to go back of its immediate causes. The present conflict represents the culmination of a struggle which has been gathering strength since the establishment of the republic in 1931. The fall of the monarchy brought to power liberal and labor groups pledged to effect by democratic methods fundamental changes in the country's economic and social system. This system had condemned the masses of the people to misery, poverty and ignorance. The reforms initiated by the republic threatened the privileges long enjoyed by army officers, the large landholders and industrialists, and the clergy. At the same time, change came too slowly to satisfy the workers in city and country. Tension between Right and Left had thus been heightened to the point where recourse to violence appeared to each faction as the easiest road to the fulfilment of its objectives.

46. Cf. "Guerre en Espagne," *Revue de Paris*, October 1, 1936, pp. 481-96. Lawrence A. Fernsworth ("Back of the Spanish Rebellion," cited) quotes from one of its recent *pronunciamientos*. This document is described as "a violent exhortation to military men to 'save Spain' from an 'international plot' to 'pulverize' it and 'promote the ruin of

religious sentiment and of the Spanish family, of capital, of labor"

47. Cf. *New York Times*, April 18, 1936.

48. Cf. W. Horsfall Carter, "Spain and the Social Revolution," *International Affairs* (London), September-October 1936, pp. 647-70.